

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 14, 2023

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary
U.S. Department of State

Dear Secretary Blinken:

Based on reports, the State Department still employs Fritz Berggren as a Foreign Service Officer and at one time he was reportedly assigned to a unit that handles special immigrant visas for Afghans.¹ This employee reportedly openly publishes hundreds of racist and antisemitic blogs, videos, and podcasts on his personal website.² It is unclear what role he currently has and, even in light of the extensive reporting the last couple years with respect to his conduct, there have been no public announcements of any disciplinary actions taken against him.³

According to Newsweek, in response to antisemitism concerns at the State Department, you sent a message to staff in 2021 stating, “this type of rhetoric has no place in the United States, at the State Department, or anywhere else. And we must be relentless in standing up and rejecting it.”⁴ I agree.

The American people deserve transparency concerning the State Department’s steps to reject this type of rhetoric and ensure fair treatment to all those applying for special immigrant visas. For Congress to better understand your policies, please provide answers to the following questions by July 28, 2023:

¹ Nahal Toosi, *U.S. Diplomat Openly Calls for Christian Nation-States, Rails Against Jews*, POLITICO, (Feb. 26, 2021), <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/02/26/diplomat-online-activity-blood-and-faith-471755>; Gabby Deutch, *U.S. Diplomat with Antisemitic Racist Blog ‘Cannot Continue to Serve’: Foreign Service Union President*, JEWISH INSIDER, (June 5, 2023), <https://jewishinsider.com/2023/06/foreign-service-union-fritz-berggren-eric-rubin-antisemitism-racism-blog/>.

² *Id.*; See also Alex J. Rouhandeh, *Over 70 State Department Staff Pen Letter Asking Blinken to Remove ‘Anti-Semitic’ Employee*, NEWSWEEK, (Aug. 31 2021), <https://www.newsweek.com/over-70-state-department-staff-pen-letter-asking-blinken-remove-anti-semitic-employee-1624712> (70 State Department employees called for Berggren’s removal because they felt unsafe due to his racist and antisemitic rhetoric).

³ *Id.*

⁴ Alex J. Rouhandeh, *Over 70 State Department Staff Pen Letter Asking Blinken to Remove ‘Anti-Semitic’ Employee*, NEWSWEEK, (Aug. 31 2021), <https://www.newsweek.com/over-70-state-department-staff-pen-letter-asking-blinken-remove-anti-semitic-employee-1624712>.

1. Is Fritz Berggren still employed at the State Department? If so, in what role, and what are his responsibilities? Provide all records relating to his role and responsibilities.⁵
2. Was Fritz Berggren required to recuse himself from any decision-making considering his reported public comments? If not, why not? If so, what was the scope of his recusal? Provide all records.
3. Was Fritz Berggren a visa application adjudicator? If so, provide the entire record of his approvals and denials. After the State Department became aware of his public comments, was he removed from the position?
4. How many visa application adjudicators have recused themselves in the assessment of a visa application in the last five years? Provide all records.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. Should you have any questions, please contact Jace Pimentel at (202) 224-0642.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
Committee on the Budget

⁵ “Records” include any written, recorded, or graphic material of any kind, including letters, memoranda, reports, notes, electronic data (emails, email attachments, and any other electronically created or stored information), calendar entries, inter-office communications, meeting minutes, phone/voice mail or recordings/records of verbal communications, and drafts (whether they resulted in final documents).